



August 1998

Office for Victims of Crime

# OVC Fact Sheet

*Advocating for the Fair*

*Treatment of Crime Victims*

## Victim Assistance in Indian Country Discretionary Grant Program

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) provides funding directly to American Indian tribes to assist in establishing reservation-based victim assistance programs in remote areas of Indian Country where there are limited or non-existent services for victims of crime. Since its inception in 1988, the Victim Assistance in Indian Country (VAIC) Discretionary Grant Program has touched the lives of thousands of Native Americans requiring victim assistance services and has stimulated the growth of a responsive victim assistance network that has become a permanent part of Native American communities.

### Program Goal

The primary goal of the VAIC program is to create permanent, accessible, and responsive victim assistance services on Indian reservations with federally-recognized tribes governed by Federal criminal jurisdiction. Today, there are approximately 120 tribes that qualify for VAIC funding.

### Available Services

Under VAIC, tribal victim assistance programs may fund a number of direct services, including:

- Crisis intervention.
- Emergency shelter.
- 24-hour crisis lines.
- Mental health counseling.
- Hiring of victim advocates.
- Emergency transportation of victims.
- Court advocacy and accompaniment.
- Provision of bilingual counseling services.

### Funding

The VAIC program is supported by monies from the Crime Victims Fund (Fund), which was established by the 1984 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). The Fund is supported, not by tax dollars, but by fines, penalty assessments, and bond forfeitures from convicted Federal offenders. Nearly 3,000 community-based organizations that serve crime victims nationwide receive funding. Some of the community-based programs supported by the Fund, which include domestic violence shelters, children's advocacy centers, and rape treatment programs, are the lifeline services that help many victims to heal.

To date, approximately 28 percent of OVC's funding for VAIC has been used to support child abuse services; 35 percent to support domestic violence services; 7 percent to support sexual assault services; and 30 percent to support services for victims of other types of crime such as drunk driving crashes. One million dollars is available to fund the VAIC programs in fiscal year (FY) 1999.

### A New Direction

From 1988 until 1996, OVC awarded VAIC grants to States for subgranting to Indian tribes or tribal organizations. In 1996, OVC considered how it might strengthen its commitment to honor tribal sovereignty and improve the government-to-government relationship between the Federal government and Indian tribes, while fulfilling its goal of improving the response to victims of crime in Indian Country. As a result, the program was modified so that tribes received funding directly from OVC.

Three primary reasons led to this change. The first was OVC's desire to provide the greatest opportunity for all federally-recognized tribes under Federal criminal jurisdiction to access the limited funding that is available. The second reason was to ensure the most effective use of those funds; and the third, was to promote innovation and foster the development of promising approaches to victim assistance in Indian Country.

## Training and Technical Assistance

The National Indian Justice Center (NIJC) was awarded a grant to provide training and technical assistance to tribes receiving VAIC funding. NIJC implements this program by conducting a survey of all VAIC programs to determine their training and technical assistance needs, categorizes and establishes priorities for the requests, and develops a comprehensive plan for delivery of the training and technical assistance. Based on their survey, NIJC then conducts individual on-site program reviews and needed training and technical assistance; provides resource materials; and provides ongoing telephone assistance. In

addition to on-site programs, NIJC also arranges regional training sessions where experts are available to offer more indepth training and tribal networking opportunities.

## For Further Information

More information about the Office for Victims of Crime is available through the following sources:

OVC ..... 202-307-5983  
OVC Web Site ..... <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/>  
OVC Resource Center ..... 800-627-6872  
OVC Resource Center Web Site ..... <http://www.ncjrs.org>

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